

## Message Text

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16

ACTION SS-30

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R 040808Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8801

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 7698

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO DIA USCINCEUR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR PINS LE XF US

SUBJECT: LEBANON'S FEDAYEEN PROBLEM

REF: JERUSALEM 1354 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: OBSERVATIONS RE SITUATION IN LEBANON BY UNTSO  
SOURCE CITED REFTEL ARE FAIRLY PERCEPTIVE AND, IN THE  
MAIN, GENERALLY ACCURATE. HOWEVER, OVERALL SITUATION  
HE RELATES IS NOT PARTICULARLY NEW, BEING ESSENTIALLY  
SAME AS THAT WHICH HAS PREVAILED HERE SINCE CLASHES  
BETWEEN LEBANESE ARMY AND FEDAYEEN IN MAY 1973. SHOULD  
BE RECALLED THAT AT THAT TIME NO LESS AN AUTHORITY  
THAN PRES. FRANGIE REFERRED TO PALESTINIAN AND FEDAYEEN  
PRESENCE IN LEBANON AS "STATE WITHIN A STATE." FOLLOW-  
ING ARE OUR COMMENTS ON POINTS RAISED IN REFTEL. END SUMMARY

1. REFTEL COINCIDES IN MANY DETAILS WITH WHAT WE HAVE  
BEEN REPORTING SINCE AS EARLY AS SPRING 1972 (C.F.,  
OUR A-88 OF 24 MAR 72, A-274 OF 27 OCT 72, A-151 OF  
15 AUG 73, AND A-11 OF 24 JAN 74, PLUS INNUMERABLE  
TELEGRAMS OVER PAST TWO YEARS). MAY 1973 CONFRONTATION,

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WHICH RESULTED IN UNEASY STANDOFF BETWEEN LEBANESE ARMY

AND FEDAYEEN, PROVED TO GOL THAT FEDAYEEN PROBLEM COULD NOT BE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL WITHOUT (A) WAGING PROTRACTED HOSTILITIES THAT WOULD INCUR UNACCEPTABLY HEAVY TOLL IN HUMAN LIVES, PROPERTY DAMAGE AND ECONOMIC DISLOCATION, AND (B) SUBJECTING LEBANON'S DELICATE CONFESSIONAL (CHRISTIAN VS. MOSLEM) AND POLITICAL (LEFT VS. RIGHT, PAN-ARAB VS. LEBANESE NATIONALIST) BALANCE TO SUCH SEVERE, POSSIBLY UNBEARABLE STRAINS AS TO SHATTER NATIONAL UNITY, BRING ABOUT REAL RISK OF CIVIL WAR, AND PERHAPS EVEN DIVIDE ARMY ALONG SECTARIAN AND/OR FACTIONAL LINES. QUITE NATURALLY, GOL LEADERSHIP AND LEBANESE PUBLIC ARE UNWILLING TO PAY SUCH PRICE OR RISK INCURRING SUCH COSTS WITHOUT SUPPORT OF OTHER ARAB STATES, WHICH SO FAR HAS BEEN MINIMAL. IN THIS CONNECTION, SHOULD BE NOTED THAT SITUATION IN LEBANON BEARS LITTLE COMPARISON WITH THAT WHICH EXISTED IN EAST JORDAN IN 1970 (OUR ANALYSIS OF THIS SUBJECT CONTAINED IN OUR A-88, MARCH 1972, REMAINS AS VALID TODAY AS IT WAS OVER TWO YEARS AGO).

2. LEBANESE ARMY TRIES (WITH ONLY PARTIAL SUCCESS) TO KEEP TABS ON FEDAYEEN MOVEMENTS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY AND INTERDICT CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS WHEN DETECTED. ON THOSE INFREQUENT OCCASIONS WHEN IT RECEIVES CLEAR-CUT ORDERS FROM HIGHER LEBANESE POLITICAL AUTHORITY, ARMY HAS ALSO ATTEMPTED INHIBIT FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT BETWEEN CAMPS AND IN COUNTRYSIDE, EXCEPT FOR REMOTE, MOUNTAINOUS AND SPARSELY-POPULATED RACHAYA AND 'ARQOUB DISTRICTS ("FATAHLAND") IN SOUTHEAST PART OF COUNTRY WHICH--ALONG WITH LEBANON'S 15 REFUGEE CAMPS--HAVE BEEN UNDER FEDAYEEN CONTROL SINCE 1969. HOWEVER, FEDAYEEN FIND IT FAIRLY EASY TO CIRCUMVENT ARMY CHECK-POINTS AND EVADE ARMY PATROLS, WHICH IN SOUTHERN BORDER AREAS ARE USUALLY SPOTTY. ONE REASON FOR THIS IS THAT ARMY UNITS ARE GENERALLY UNDERSTRENGTH AND STRETCHED VERY THIN IN COUNTRYSIDE. IN ADDITION, ARMY MUST MAINTAIN ADEQUATE COMBAT STRENGTH IN AND AROUND MAIN URBAN CENTERS, PARTICULARLY BEIRUT, WHICH 1973 CLASHES SHOWED TO BE EXTREMELY VULNERABLE TO THREAT OF ATTACKS AND EFFORTS AT CIVIL DISRUPTION ON PART OF FEDAYEEN. (ONE

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MUST ALSO REMEMBER THAT BORDER IS LONG AND TERRAIN THERE IS DIFFICULT TO PATROL.) ANOTHER, PERHAPS MORE CRUCIAL, REASON IS CHRONIC FAILURE OF GOL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TO ISSUE PRECISE, UNEQUIVOCAL INSTRUCTIONS TO ARMY COMMANDERS REGARDING LIMITS TO BE SET ON FEDAYEEN ACTIVITY AND WHAT ACTION TO TAKE IF THOSE LIMITS ARE VIOLATED. RESULT IS THAT MANY ARMY OFFICERS, FACED WITH UNCERTAINTY AND EVEN WITH POSSIBILITY OF BEING

MADE SCAPEGOATS FOR OVERLY AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR TOWARD FEDAYEEN, TEND TO ERR ON SIDE OF INACTION, RATHER THAN ACTION, AND TO REPLY ON "NEGOTIATIONS" WITH FEDAYEEN IN ORDER WORK OUT COMPROMISES AND ACCOMMODATIONS RATHER THAN PUSH MATTERS TO POINT OF CONFRONTATION. SHOULD BE NOTED, IN FAIRNESS, THAT LEBANESE ARMY AS WHOLE HAS RESPONDED WITH EXCELLENT SPIRIT AND CONSIDERABLE EFFECTIVENESS TO CLEAR-CUT DIRECTIVES FROM GOL LEADERSHIP ON THOSE CRITICAL OCCASIONS (E.G., MAY 1973) WHEN SUCH INSTRUCTIONS HAVE BEEN FORTHCOMING.

3. BOTH UNTSO OFFICES IN BEIRUT AND HIGH-RISE HOUSING PROJECT FOR LEBANESE ARMY OFFICERS AND THEIR FAMILIES OCCUPY PROMINENT SITES AT MAJOR INTERSECTION CLOSE TO SABRA/SHATILA REFUGEE CAMP, WHICH IS NERVE-CENTER OF FEDAYEEN APPARATUS IN LEBANON. ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD WAS SCENE OF SOME OF FIERCEST FIGHTING DURING MAY 1973, AND INTERSECTION REMAINED PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE THROUGHOUT LEBANESE-FEDAYEEN NEGOTIATIONS THAT FOLLOWED. LEBANESE ARMY HAS INSISTED ON MAINTAINING ARMORED UNIT BEHIND OFFICERS QUARTERS, ACROSS ROAD FROM UNTSO OFFICES, DESPITE STRENUOUS FEDAYEEN OBJECTIONS. SINCE GOL DOUBTLESS BELIEVES THIS FORCE IS SUFFICIENT TO PROTECT BOTH INSTALLATIONS, IT PROBABLY WAS UNWILLING TO PROVOKE FEDAYEEN FURTHER BY SETTING UP SPECIAL GUARD AT UNTSO.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED DIA USCINCEUR.

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W  
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R 040808Z JUL 74  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8802  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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4. QUESTION OF ARMY ACCESS TO LEBANON'S 15 REFUGEE CAMPS, ALTHOUGH DISCUSSED INCONCLUSIVELY BY GOL WITH FEDAYEEN FOLLOWING MAY 1973 CLASHES, HAS BEEN DEAD LETTER FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES SINCE EARLIER LEBANESE-FEDAYEEN FIGHTING IN OCT 1969. AT THAT TIME, LEBANESE POLICE FLED FROM CAMPS, LEAVING THEM TO BE OCCUPIED BY FEDAYEEN. NO LEBANESE OFFICIAL HAS SET FOOT IN THEM SINCE.

5. TOTAL ARMED STRENGTH OF FEDAYEEN IN LEBANON IS MURKY SUBJECT, BUT WE ESTIMATE NUMBER OF FEDAYEEN "REGULARS" TO BE IN NEIGHBORHOOD OF 8,000 COUNTRYWIDE. (THIS FIGURE MAY HAVE GONE AS HIGH AS 9,000 FOLLOWING GOLAN DISENGAGEMENT AND SARG'S REPORTED DECISION TO SHIFT MORE SA'IQA ELEMENTS TO LEBANON.) WE HAVE GENERALLY PLACED STRENGTH OF FEDAYEEN "MILITIA" (WHICH CAN INCLUDE ALMOST ANY GUN-TOTING CAMP DWELLER WILLING TO BE COUNTED) AT AROUND 15-20,000--I.E., SOME WHAT LOWER THAN UNRWA COMGEN RENNIE'S ESTIMATE--BUT THIS FIGURE COULD BE SWELLED CONSIDERABLY IF, AS IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE, ARMED SYMPATHIZERS AMONG LEBANESE MOSLEM AND LEFTIST GROUPS WERE TO JOIN FEDAYEEN IN CONFRONTING THE ARMY. (FACT THAT THIS DID NOT HAPPEN DURING LIMITED

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FIGHTING IN MAY 1973 DOES NOT MEAN IT WOULD NOT HAPPEN IN EVENT OF AN ALL-OUT CONFRONTATION.) IN OTHER WORDS, FEDAYEEN AND THEIR POTENTIAL ALLIES CONSIDERABLY OUT-NUMBER LEBANESE ARMY (CURRENT STRENGTH OF WHICH IS 15,500--PLUS 2,500 - 3,000 RESERVISTS CALLED UP FOR ONE YEAR IN AUG 1973--OF WHOM NO MORE THAN 8,000 ARE COMBAT EFFECTIVES) BY RATIO OF ANYWHERE FROM 1.6:-, OR HIGHER.

6. WE HAVE GIVEN LONG AND CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO QUESTION OF WHO WOULD WIN IN ALL-OUT FEDAYEEN/ARMY CONFRONTATION. GIVEN ARMY'S ADVANTAGE IN FIRE-POWER, TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE, WE THINK IT WOULD EVENTUALLY PREVAIL OVER FEDAYEEN--ASSUMING THAT LARGE-SCALE SYRIAN INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF FEDAYEEN COULD SOMEHOW BE PREVENTED (A BIG ASSUMPTION IN LIGHT OF PAST SARG BEHAVIOR IN 1969 AND 1973). AS NOTED ABOVE, HOWEVER, THE PROCESS WOULD BE SO PROLONGED AND COSTLY--CARRYING WITH IT EVER-PRESENT RISK OF FOREIGN INTERVENTION (SEE BELOW), SECTARIAN STRIFE AND POLITICAL FACTIONALISM--THAT GOL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WILL SIMPLY NOT COUNTENANCE IT.

7. LEBANESE ALSO FERVENTLY WISH THAT SYRIA (OR EGYPT, KUWAIT, SAUDI ARABIA, ETC.) WOULD ASSIST THEM IN EXERTING CONTROL OVER FEDAYEEN IN LEBANON, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN FEW SIGNS THAT GOLAN DISENGAGEMENT HAS PRODUCED ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN SARG POLICY VIS-A-VIS THE FEDAYEEN. SARG CONTROLS SA'IQA AND, AS BEST WE CAN DETERMINE, HAS INCREASED THAT ORGANIZATION'S STRENGTH IN LEBANON. SARG ALSO USES SA'IQA TO EXPAND ITS INFLUENCE OVER OTHER FEDAYEEN GROUPS, ALTHOUGH ITS SUCCESS IN THIS REGARD HAS BEEN PARTIAL AND OFTEN FLEETING. FROM STANDPOINT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, COFFERS OF SAUDIS, KUWAITIS, LIBYANS, AND IRAQIS HAVE GENERALLY MEANT MORE TO FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT AS WHOLE THAN THOSE OF SARG. (MAIN SYRIAN CONTRIBUTION, IN EYES OF FATAH/PLO "ESTABLISHMENT," HAS BEEN TO PROVIDE POLITICAL, PROGAGANDA AND (POTENTIALLY) MILITARY SUPPORT IN TIMES OF CRISIS AND TO ACT AS FUNNEL THROUGH WHICH SOVIET BLOC ARMS SHIPMENTS REACH FEDAYEEN IN LEBANON. LATTER FUNCTION IN EASY, SINCE GOL HAS NEITHER MANPOWER NOR RESOURCES TO MOUNT EFFECTIE INTERDICTION EFFORT

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ALONG ITS RUGGED EASTERN BORDER.) AS FOR GOL'S ABILITY TO INTERCEPT FUNDS DESTINED FOR FEDAYEEN USE IN LEBANON, WIDE-OPEN AND FREE-WHEELING CHARACTER OF BEIRUT MONEY MARKET RENDERS THIS AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK.

8. WE HAVE COMMENTED AT LENGTH ON POINTS RAISED REFTEL BECAUSE WE SHARE UNTSO OURCE'S BELIEF THAT SITUATION STEMMING FROM FEDAYEEN PRESENCE IN LEBANON IS DEPRESSING AND THAT IT MAKES PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE ALARMING. WE WOULD POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THATIMPROVEMENT LEBANON'S MILITARY CAPABILITY AND ARAB SUPPORT OF LEBANESE EFFORTS TO CONTROL FEDAYEEN EXTREMIST ELEMENTS WOULD CERTAINLY HELP IMPROVE SITUATION. HOWEVER, FACT REMAINS FEDAYEEN PROBLEM HAS ITS ROOTS IN PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, AND IT WILL NOT DISAPPEAR UNTIL THAT MORE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION IS AT LAST RESOLVED IN SOME KIND OF JUST AND LASTING ME PEACE SETTLEMENT. IN MEANTIME, LEBANON MAY BECOME THAT PROBLEM'S LATEST AND MOST HAPLESS VICTIM.

GODLEY

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**To:** STATE JERUSALEM  
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